

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations

Busdrivers

(O*NET 97108 and 97111)

Significant Points

- Opportunities should be good, particularly for school busdriver jobs.
- A commercial driver's license is required to operate on interstate bus routes.
- Busdrivers must possess strong customer service skills, including communication skills and the ability to manage large groups of people.

Nature of the Work

Millions of Americans every day leave the driving to busdrivers. Busdrivers are essential in providing passengers with an alternative to their automobiles or other forms of transportation. Intercity busdrivers transport people between regions of a State or of the country; local transit busdrivers, within a metropolitan area or county; motorcoach drivers, on charter excursions and tours; and school busdrivers, to and from schools and related events.

Drivers pick up and drop off passengers at bus stops, stations, or, in the case of students, at regularly scheduled neighborhood locations based on strict time schedules. Drivers must operate vehicles safely, especially when traffic is heavier than normal. However, they cannot let light traffic put them ahead of schedule so that they miss passengers.

Intercity and local transit busdrivers report to their assigned terminal or garage, where they stock up on tickets or transfers and prepare trip report forms. In some firms, maintenance departments are responsible for keeping vehicles in good condition. In others, drivers may check their vehicle's tires, brakes, windshield wipers, lights, oil, fuel, and water supply, before beginning their routes. Drivers usually verify that the bus has safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and emergency reflectors in case of an emergency.

During the course of their shift, intercity and local transit busdrivers collect fares; answer questions about schedules, routes, and transfer points; and sometimes announce stops. Intercity busdrivers may make only a single one-way trip to a distant city or a round trip each day. They may stop at towns just a few miles apart or only at large cities hundreds of miles apart. Local transit busdrivers may make several trips each day over the same city and suburban streets, stopping as frequently as every few blocks.

Local transit busdrivers submit daily trip reports with a record of trips made, significant schedule delays, and mechanical problems. Intercity drivers who drive across State or national boundaries must comply with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations. These include completing vehicle inspection reports and recording distances traveled and the periods of time they spend driving, performing other duties, and off duty.

Motorcoach drivers transport passengers on charter trips and sightseeing tours. Drivers routinely interact with customers and tour guides to make the trip as comfortable and informative as possible. They are directly responsible for keeping to strict schedules, adhering to the guidelines of the tours' itinerary, and the overall

success of the trip. Trips frequently last more than 1 day, and if they are assigned to an extended tour, they may be away for a week or more. As with all drivers who drive across State or national boundaries, motorcoach drivers must comply with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations.

School busdrivers usually drive the same routes each day, stopping to pick up pupils in the morning and return them to their homes in the afternoon. Some school busdrivers also transport students and teachers on field trips or to sporting events.

Busdrivers must be alert to prevent accidents, especially in heavy traffic or in bad weather, and to avoid sudden stops or swerves that jar passengers. School busdrivers must exercise particular caution when children are getting on or off the bus. They must maintain order on their bus and enforce school safety standards by allowing only students to board. In addition, they must know and enforce rules regarding student conduct used throughout the school system.

School busdrivers do not always have to report to an assigned terminal or garage. In some cases, school busdrivers often have the choice of taking their bus home, or parking it in a more convenient area. School busdrivers do not collect fares. Instead, they prepare weekly reports on the number of students, trips or runs, work hours, miles, and the amount of fuel consumption. Their supervisors set time schedules and routes for the day or week.

Working Conditions

Driving a bus through heavy traffic while dealing with passengers is not physically strenuous, but can be stressful and fatiguing. On the other hand, many drivers enjoy the opportunity to work without direct supervision, with full responsibility for their bus and passengers.



Many busdrivers enjoy the opportunity to work without direct supervision, with full responsibility for their bus and passengers.

Intercity busdrivers may work nights, weekends, and holidays and often spend nights away from home, where they stay in hotels at company expense. Senior drivers with regular routes have regular weekly work schedules, but others do not have regular schedules and must be prepared to report for work on short notice. They report for work only when called for a charter assignment or to drive extra buses on a regular route. Intercity bus travel and charter work tends to be seasonal. From May through August, drivers may work the maximum number of hours per week that regulations allow. During winter, junior drivers may work infrequently, except for busy holiday travel periods, and may be furloughed for periods of time.

School busdrivers work only when school is in session. Many work 20 hours a week or less, driving one or two routes in the morning and afternoon. Drivers taking field or athletic trips or who also have midday kindergarten routes may work more hours a week.

Regular local transit busdrivers usually have a 5-day workweek; Saturdays and Sundays are considered regular workdays. Some drivers work evenings and after midnight. To accommodate commuters, many work "split shifts," for example, 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., with time off in between.

Tour and charter bus drivers may work any day and all hours of the day, including weekends and holidays. Their hours are dictated by the charter trips booked and the schedule and prearranged itinerary of tours. However, like all busdrivers, their weekly hours must be consistent with the Department of Transportation's rules and regulations concerning hours of service. For example, a long-distance driver may not work more than 60 hours in any 7-day period and drivers must rest 8 hours for every 10 hours of driving.

Employment

Busdrivers held about 638,000 jobs in 1998. More than a third worked part time. About two-thirds of all drivers worked for school systems or companies providing school bus services under contract, as shown in the accompanying chart. Most of the remainder worked for private and local government transit systems; some also worked for intercity and charter buslines.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Busdriver qualifications and standards are established by State and Federal regulations. All drivers must comply with Federal regulations and any State regulations that exceed Federal requirements.

Federal regulations require drivers who operate vehicles designed to transport 16 or more passengers to hold a commercial driver's license (CDL) from the State in which they live.

To qualify for a commercial driver's license, applicants must pass a written test on rules and regulations and then demonstrate they can operate a bus safely. A national data bank permanently records all driving violations incurred by persons who hold commercial licenses. A State may not issue a commercial driver's license to a driver who already has a license suspended or revoked in another State. A driver with a CDL must accompany trainees until they get their own CDL. Information on how to apply for a commercial driver's license may be obtained from State motor vehicle administrations.

While many States allow those who are 18 years and older to drive buses within State borders, the U.S. Department of Transportation establishes minimum qualifications for busdrivers engaged in interstate commerce. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations require drivers to be at least 21 years old and pass a physical examination once every 2 years. The main physical requirements include good hearing, 20/40 vision with or without glasses or corrective lenses, and a 70 degree field of vision in each eye. Drivers must not be color blind. Drivers must be able to hear a forced whisper in one ear at not less than 5 feet, with or without a hearing aide. Drivers must have normal use of arms and legs and normal blood pressure. Drivers may not use any controlled substances, unless prescribed by a licensed physician. Persons with epilepsy or diabetes controlled by insulin are not permitted to be interstate busdrivers. Federal regulations also require employers to test their drivers for alcohol and drug use as a condition of employment, and require periodic random tests while on duty. In addition, a driver must not have been convicted of a felony involving the use of a motor vehicle; a crime involving drugs; driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or hit-and-run driving which resulted in injury or death. All drivers must be able to read and speak English well enough to read road signs, prepare reports, and communicate with law enforcement officers and the public. In addition, drivers must take a written examination on the Motor Carrier Safety Regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Many employers prefer high school graduates and require a written test of ability to follow complex bus schedules. Many intercity and public transit bus companies prefer applicants who are at least 24 years of age; some require several years of bus or truck driving experience. In some States, school busdrivers must pass a background investigation to uncover any criminal record or history of mental problems.

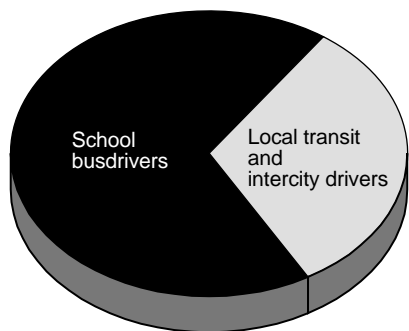
Because busdrivers deal with passengers, they must be courteous. They need an even temperament and emotional stability because driving in heavy, fast-moving, or stop-and-go traffic and dealing with passengers can be stressful. Drivers must have strong customer service skills, including communication skills and the ability to coordinate and manage large groups of people.

Most intercity bus companies and local transit systems give driver trainees 2 to 8 weeks of classroom and "behind-the-wheel" instruction. In the classroom, trainees learn U.S. Department of Transportation and company work rules, safety regulations, State and municipal driving regulations, and safe driving practices. They also learn to read schedules, determine fares, keep records, and deal courteously with passengers.

School busdrivers are also required to obtain a commercial driver's license from the State in which they live. Many persons who enter school busdriving have never driven any vehicle larger than an automobile. They receive between 1 and 4 weeks of driving instruction plus classroom training on State and local laws, regulations, and policies of operating school buses; safe driving practices; driver-pupil relations; first aid; disabled student special needs; and emergency evacuation procedures. School busdrivers must also be aware of school systems rules for discipline and conduct for busdrivers and the students they transport.

Most busdrivers operate school buses.

Distribution of wage and salary employment, 1998



During training, busdrivers practice driving on set courses. They practice turns and zigzag maneuvers, backing up, and driving in narrow lanes. Then they drive in light traffic and, eventually, on congested highways and city streets. They also make trial runs, without passengers, to improve their driving skills and learn the routes. Local transit trainees memorize and drive each of the runs operating out of their assigned garage. New drivers begin with a "break-in" period. They make regularly scheduled trips with passengers, accompanied by an experienced driver who gives helpful tips, answers questions, and evaluates the new driver's performance.

New intercity and local transit drivers are usually placed on an "extra" list to drive charter runs, extra buses on regular runs, and special runs (for example, during morning and evening rush hours and to sports events). They also substitute for regular drivers who are ill or on vacation. New drivers remain on the extra list, and may work only part time, perhaps for several years, until they have enough seniority to receive a regular run.

Senior drivers may bid for runs they prefer, such as those with more work hours, lighter traffic, weekends off, or, in the case of intercity busdrivers, higher earnings or fewer workdays per week.

Opportunities for promotion are generally limited. However, experienced drivers may become supervisors or dispatchers, assigning buses to drivers, checking whether drivers are on schedule, re-routing buses to avoid blocked streets or other problems, and dispatching extra vehicles and service crews to scenes of accidents and breakdowns. In transit agencies with rail systems, drivers may become train operators or station attendants. A few drivers become managers. Promotion in publicly owned bus systems is often by competitive civil service examination. Some motorcoach drivers purchase their own equipment and go in to business for themselves.

Job Outlook

Persons seeking jobs as busdrivers over the 1998-2008 period should encounter good opportunities. Many employers have recently had difficulty finding qualified candidates to fill vacancies left by departing employees. Opportunities should be best for individuals with good driving records who are willing to start on a part-time or irregular schedule, as well as for those seeking jobs as school busdrivers in rapidly growing metropolitan areas. Those seeking higher paying intercity and public transit busdriver positions may encounter competition.

Employment of busdrivers is expected to increase about as fast as average for all occupations through the year 2008, primarily to meet the transportation needs of a growing school-age population and local environmental concerns. Thousands of additional job openings are expected to occur each year because of the need to replace workers who take jobs in other occupations, retire, or leave the occupation for other reasons.

School busdriving jobs should be easiest to acquire because most are part time positions with high turnover and minimal training requirements. The number of school busdrivers is expected to increase as a result of growth in elementary and secondary school enrollments. In addition, as more of the Nation's population is concentrated in suburban areas—where students generally ride school buses—and less in the central cities—where transportation is not provided for most pupils—more school busdrivers will be needed.

Employment of local transit and intercity drivers will grow as bus ridership increases. Local and intercity bus travel is expected to increase as the population and labor force grows. However, more individual travelers will opt to travel by airplane or automobile rather than by bus. Most growth in intercity drivers will probably be in group charter travel, rather than scheduled intercity bus services. There may continue to be competition for local transit and intercity busdriver jobs in some areas because many of these positions offer relatively high wages and attractive benefits. The most competitive positions will be those offering regular hours and steady driving routes.

Full-time busdrivers are rarely laid off during recessions. However, hours of part-time local transit and intercity busdrivers

may be reduced if bus ridership decreases because fewer extra buses would be needed. Seasonal layoffs are common. Many intercity busdrivers with little seniority, for example, are furloughed during the winter when regular schedule and charter business falls off; school busdrivers seldom work during the summer or school holidays.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of transit and intercity busdrivers were \$11.72 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.58 and \$16.04 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.66 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$19.18 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of transit and intercity busdrivers in 1997 were as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Local government, except education and hospitals | \$14.20 |
| Intercity and rural bus transportation | 10.50 |
| Local and suburban transportation | 10.20 |
| School buses, contract | 10.20 |
| Bus charter service | 8.80 |

Median hourly earnings of school busdrivers were \$9.05 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.33 and \$11.44 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.59 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$14.00 an hour. Median hourly earnings of school busdrivers in 1997 were \$9.20 in contract school buses and \$8.60 in elementary and secondary schools.

According to the American Public Transit Association, in early 1999 local transit busdrivers in metropolitan areas with more than 2 million inhabitants were paid an average top hourly wage rate of about \$17.90 by companies with over 1,000 employees, and about \$16.00 by those with fewer than 1,000 employees. In smaller metropolitan areas, they had an average top hourly wage rate of about \$14.70 in areas with between 250,000 and 500,000 residents, and about \$12.60 in areas with resident populations below 50,000. Generally, drivers can reach the top rate in 3 or 4 years.

The benefits busdrivers receive from their employers vary greatly. Most intercity and local transit busdrivers receive paid health and life insurance, sick leave, and free bus rides on any of the regular routes of their line or system. Drivers who work full time also get as much as 4 weeks of vacation annually. Most local transit busdrivers are also covered by dental insurance and pension plans. School busdrivers receive sick leave, and many are covered by health and life insurance and pension plans. Because they generally do not work when school is not in session, they do not get vacation leave. In a number of States, local transit and school busdrivers employed by local governments are covered by a State-wide public employee pension system.

Most intercity and many local transit busdrivers are members of the Amalgamated Transit Union. Local transit busdrivers in New York and several other large cities belong to the Transport Workers Union of America. Some drivers belong to the United Transportation Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Related Occupations

Other workers who drive vehicles on highways and city streets are taxi drivers, truckdrivers, and chauffeurs.

Sources of Additional Information

For further information on employment opportunities, contact local transit systems, intercity buslines, school systems, or the local offices of the State employment service.

General information on busdriving is available from:

➤ American Bus Association, 1100 New York Avenue NW., Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20005. Internet: <http://www.buses.org>

General information on school busdriving is available from:

➤ National School Transportation Association, P.O. Box 2639, Springfield, VA 22152. Internet: <http://www.schooltrans.com>

General information on local transit busdriving is available from:
 American Public Transit Association, 1201 New York Ave. NW., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005. Internet: <http://www.apta.com>
 General information on motorcoach driving is available from:
 United Motorcoach Association, 113 S. West St., 4th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314. Telephone (toll free): 1-800-424-8262. Internet: <http://www.uma.org>

Material Moving Equipment Operators

(O*NET 97902, 97905, 97908, 97911, 97914, 97917, 97921, 97923A, 97923B, 97926, 97928, 97932, 97935, 97941, 97944, 97947, 97951, 97953, and 97989A)

Significant Points

- Most workers acquire their skills on the job.
- Workers in these occupations often have high pay rates, but seasonal work may reduce earnings.

Nature of the Work

Material moving equipment operators use machinery to move construction materials, earth, petroleum products, and other heavy materials. Generally, they move materials over short distances—around a construction site, factory, or warehouse. Some move materials on or off trucks and ships. Operators control equipment by moving levers or foot pedals, operating switches, or turning dials. They may also set up and inspect equipment, make adjustments, and perform minor repairs when needed.

Material moving equipment operators are classified by the type of equipment they operate. Each piece of equipment requires different skills to move different types of loads. (For information on *operating engineers, paving and surfacing equipment operators, and grader, bulldozer, and scraper operators* see the statement on construction equipment operators, elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Industrial truck and tractor operators drive and control industrial trucks or tractors equipped with lifting devices, such as a forklift or boom, and trailer hitches. A typical industrial truck, often called a forklift or lift truck, has a hydraulic lifting mechanism and forks. Industrial truck operators use these forks to carry loads on a skid, or pallet, around a factory or warehouse. They also pull trailers loaded with materials, goods, or equipment within factories and warehouses, or around outdoor storage areas.

Excavation and loading machine operators dig and load sand, gravel, earth, or similar materials into trucks or onto conveyors using machinery equipped with scoops, shovels, or buckets. Construction and mining industries employ virtually all *excavation and loading machine operators*.

Crane and tower operators lift materials, machinery, or other heavy objects. They extend or retract a horizontally mounted boom to lower or raise a hook attached to the loadline. Most operators coordinate their maneuvers in response to hand signals and radioed instructions. Operators position the loads from the on-board console or from a remote console at the site. While crane and tower operators are noticeable at office building and other construction sites, the biggest group works in primary metal, metal fabrication, and transportation equipment manufacturing industries that use heavy, bulky materials.

Hoist and winch operators control movement of cables, cages and platforms to move workers and materials for construction, manufacturing, logging and other industrial operations. They also lube and maintain the drum and cables and make other minor repairs. One half of all jobs for hoist and winch operators were found in manufacturing or mining industries.

Other material moving equipment operators tend air compressors or pumps at construction sites, or operate oil or natural gas pumps and compressors at wells and on pipelines. Some operate

ship loading and unloading equipment, conveyors, hoists, and other specialized material handling equipment such as mine or railroad tank car unloading equipment.

Material moving equipment operators may keep records of materials moved, and do some manual loading and unloading. They also may clean, fuel, and service their equipment.

Working Conditions

Many material moving equipment operators work outdoors in every type of climate and weather condition. Industrial truck and tractor operators work mainly in warehouses or manufacturing plants. Some machines are noisy and shake or jolt the operator. These jobs have become much safer with overhead guards on forklift trucks and other safety equipment. As with most machinery, most accidents can be avoided by observing proper operating procedures and safety practices.

Employment

Material moving equipment operators held about 808,000 jobs in 1998. They were distributed among the detailed occupation groups as follows:

| | |
|---|---------|
| Industrial truck and tractor operators | 415,000 |
| Excavation and loading machine operators | 106,000 |
| Crane and tower operators | 49,000 |
| Hoist and winch operators | 11,000 |
| All other material moving equipment operators | 228,000 |



Material moving equipment operators move materials around a construction site, factory, or warehouse.